

Indian Knowledge System (IKS): Its Implications in Social Life

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Abstract

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a comprehensive idea rooted in the cultural, philosophical, and scientific heritage of ancient India. While the term "IKS" is modern, its foundations lie in ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Darshanas, which collectively shaped a systematic, dynamic, and practice-based approach to knowledge transmission. IKS is anchored in the core pillars of Gnyan (knowledge), Vignyan (science), and Jeevan Darshan (philosophy of life) promoting real-world application. It emphasizes holistic development, integrating physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual well-being through concepts like Dharma, Karma, Yoga, and Ahimsa. The six schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy offer diverse perspectives on reality, ethics, and self-realization. These philosophies underpin societal values, sustainable living, and personal responsibility, aligning life with nature and universal order. Ayurveda and Vedanta represent the health and spiritual dimensions of IKS, advocating balance, natural healing, and inner awakening. Practices like yoga and meditation facilitate self-discipline, emotional stability, and spiritual growth. Key ethical principles such as Ahimsa (non-violence) and Seva (selfless service) encourage compassion and social harmony. The ideals of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("The world is one family") and global interconnectedness are central to IKS, promoting peace, inclusivity, and respect for diversity. Recognized in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, IKS is now being reintegrated into modern academia for its interdisciplinary insights and relevance in addressing contemporary challenges. By bridging traditional wisdom with modern thought, the Indian Knowledge System fosters a balanced, sustainable, and meaningful way of life. It not only honours India's intellectual legacy but also serves as a transformative tool for both individual evolution and societal well-being.

Key words: Darshana, Dharma, Karma, Ahimsa, Yoga. Seva

1. Introduction

The term Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a recent development but the very idea of this knowledge system is product of rich culture, knowledge, glory and heritage of ancient India. It represents a well-organized and methodical approach of passing knowledge from one generation to

another. Unlike a mere cultural tradition, it is recognized as a deliberate and thoughtful process of knowledge transmission. Deeply embedded in ancient Indian scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Upavedas, IKS forms the intellectual foundation upon which much of India's historical wisdom rests. Acknowledged in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, IKS emphasizes the integration of India's traditional knowledge into modern education. The system revolves around three fundamental pillars: Gnyan (knowledge), Vignyan (science), and Jeevan Darshan (philosophy of life). These core concepts were not static; rather, they evolved through a continuous cycle of observation, inquiry, experimentation, and logical reasoning. This dynamic method ensured that knowledge was not only preserved but also tested and refined across generations. A distinctive feature of IKS is its emphasis on validation and real-world application. Knowledge was assessed through practice and evidence, making it both practical and relevant. As a result, the influence of IKS extended far beyond spiritual or philosophical realms. It made significant contributions to a variety of fields including education, governance, law, justice, craftsmanship, trade, and commerce as well as social life. Today, the Indian Knowledge System is increasingly being recognized for its holistic and interdisciplinary approach. It offers valuable insights and sustainable practices that are highly relevant even in the modern context. Reintegrating IKS into today's academic and professional environments not only honors India's rich intellectual heritage but also provides innovative solutions for contemporary challenges. Ultimately, IKS serves as a bridge connecting traditional wisdom with modern knowledge systems.

Present Social Life in the Light of Indian knowledge system:

The base of Indian Knowledge System is the glorious philosophy, culture and heritage of ancient India. These knowledge systems are rich and diverse, with six primary schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy collectively known as the Darshanas. Each school offers a unique perspective on reality, knowledge, and the self realization: These six schools are:

1. **Nyaya** – Emphasizes logic and epistemology, focusing on methods of reasoning and the means of acquiring valid knowledge.
2. **Vaisheshika** – Centers on metaphysics and atomism, proposing that all objects in the universe are made up of indivisible atoms.
3. **Sankhya** – A dualistic philosophy that distinguishes between Purusha (pure consciousness) and Prakriti (matter), explains creation through their interaction.
4. **Yoga** – Complements Samkhya by emphasizing discipline, meditation, and ethical practices as a path to spiritual liberation and self-realization.
5. **Mimamsa** – Focuses on the interpretation of Vedic texts, particularly rituals and duties, emphasizing the importance of correct action.
6. **Vedanta** – Delves into the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads, exploring the nature of reality, the self, and the ultimate unity of all existence.

Together, these Darshanas form a comprehensive philosophical framework that has profoundly influenced Indian thought and spiritual traditions. The way of life in Indian Knowledge Systems is deeply rooted in Sanatana Dharma, a timeless tradition that embraces all aspects of human existence—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. This holistic worldview reflects a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms and emphasizes the need to live in harmony with nature. Indian

Knowledge Systems promote values that support environmental stewardship and sustainable living. At their core are fundamental principles such as:

- **Dharma** – Upholding moral and ethical conduct.
- **Karma** – Recognizing the law of cause and effect in actions.
- **Yoga** – More than physical postures, it is a comprehensive discipline that unites body, mind, and spirit.
- **Ahimsa** – Practicing non-violence in thought, word, and deed.
- **Satya and Aparigraha** – Embracing truthfulness and non-possessiveness.
- **Seva** – Engaging in selfless service for the welfare of others.
- **Respect for Nature** – Valuing and protecting the natural world as a sacred duty.

Together, these principles form the foundation of a meaningful and balanced life, guiding individuals toward personal growth and collective well-being.

Well-being in Indian Knowledge Systems

Physical well-being is deeply rooted in the ancient science of Ayurveda and the spiritual philosophy of Vedanta, both of which offer holistic approaches to health and self-realization. Ayurveda, one of the most significant branches of the Indian knowledge tradition, is an ancient Indian system of medicine that dates back thousands of years. It advocates for a holistic approach to health, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the mind, body, and spirit. Key principles of Ayurveda include: Balance of the three doshas – Vata (air and space), Pitta (fire and water), and Kapha (earth and water), which govern the body's functioning. Preventive cares like focusing on maintaining the health rather than just curing illness. Natural healings like using herbs, diet, lifestyle practices, and therapies to restore balance. Integration of practices includes yoga, meditation, dietary guidelines, and herbal remedies to support physical and mental well-being. Classical texts such as the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita offer comprehensive insights into medical knowledge, including disease diagnosis, treatments, and even surgical techniques. Complementing Ayurveda, Vedanta is a profound philosophical and spiritual tradition that delves into the nature of reality and human existence. It encourages: self-inquiry – understanding the true nature of the self (Atman). Self-realization – recognizing the unity of the individual soul with the universal consciousness (Brahman). Spiritual growth – moving beyond material concerns to attain lasting wisdom and peace. Vedanta teaches that the ultimate truth lies within, and by turning inward, individuals can achieve liberation (moksha) and inner fulfillment. By following the integrated principles of Ayurveda and Vedanta, individuals can cultivate physical well-being, mental clarity, emotional balance, spiritual evolution. Together, these systems offer a timeless guide to leading a balanced, healthy, and meaningful life.

Yoga and meditation

Yoga and meditation are foundational practices within the Indian knowledge system aimed at achieving harmony between the body, mind, and spirit. Rooted in ancient wisdom, these practices are not merely physical routines but a comprehensive way of life that fosters inner growth, discipline, and spiritual realization. It is a holistic system that integrates physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. The

key components of yoga include: Asanas (Physical Postures) promote strength, flexibility, and physical health. Pranayama (Breathing Techniques) regulate the breath to control life force energy and calm the mind. Dhyana (Meditation) cultivates inner stillness, awareness, and spiritual growth. Yoga is not limited to physical postures; it is a broad discipline encompassing multiple paths to suit different temperaments and life goals: Different forms of yoga includes: Hatha Yoga – Focuses on physical postures and breath control. Raja Yoga means of meditation and mental discipline. Bhakti Yoga which means devotional path through love and surrender to the divine. Jnana Yoga means path of knowledge and self-inquiry. Karma Yoga means selfless action and service without attachment to results. Together, these forms offer diverse avenues for personal transformation and self-realization. Meditation is a vital component of yogic practice, designed to bring mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual insight. By training the mind to focus inward, individuals can: reduce stress and anxiety, cultivate mindfulness and presence, access deeper states of consciousness, experience inner peace and connection with the self. Meditation acts as a bridge between the external and internal worlds, allowing practitioners to transcend distractions and connect with their true nature. In the broader context of Sanatana Dharma, yoga and meditation are not just practices but integral parts of daily life. They encourage: self-discipline, self-awareness, and spiritual maturity, alignment with universal values such as compassion, truth, and non-violence. By incorporating yoga and meditation into one's routine, individuals can nurture physical health, emotional resilience, mental focus, and spiritual elevation — leading to a balanced and purposeful life.

Dharma and Karma: Guiding Principles of IKS

At the heart of Indian knowledge systems are two key principles: Dharma and Karma. These concepts serve as moral and spiritual guidelines, helping individuals live meaningful, ethical, and responsible lives. Dharma means living in a way that is right, moral, and responsible. It is about doing your duty based on who you are—your age, role in society, family responsibilities, and stage of life. Dharma teaches us to be honest, kind, respectful, and to live in harmony with others and the natural world. It is not the same for everyone; it changes depending on your position and responsibilities. Dharma helps keep society balanced and supports universal order. By following one's dharma, a person contributes to their own well-being and to the well-being of others. Karma means that every action has consequences. Good actions bring good results, while harmful actions lead to suffering. This idea encourages people to: be selfless and responsible, think before they act, understand that what they do now will affect their future. There are 12 basic ideas often associated with the laws of karma: the great law – what you give out is what you get back, the law of creation – you shape your own life through your choices and actions, the law of humility – change starts by accepting the truth about yourself and your life, the law of growth – the only person you can truly change is yourself, the law of responsibility – you are responsible for what happens in your life, the law of connection – everything and everyone is connected; your actions affect others, the law of focus – concentrate on one thing at a time; stay focused on the present, the law of giving and hospitality – when you give from the heart, you receive in return, the law of here and now – let go of the past and don't worry too much about the future, the law of change – change is part of life, and accepting it helps you grow, the law of patience and reward – good things take time; persistence pays off, the law of significance and inspiration – what matters most is the intention behind your actions. Together, Dharma and Karma guide individuals to live ethically and

truthfully, take responsibility for their actions, stay connected to the present moment, treat others with care and compassion, grow spiritually and personally. These timeless values help people lead balanced, meaningful, and purposeful lives in harmony with themselves, others, and the world around them.

The Idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The World is One Family)

"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is a Sanskrit phrase that means "the world is one family." It is a beautiful and powerful concept from the Indian Knowledge Systems that teaches us to see all people as part of one global family, no matter where they come from or what their background is. This idea encourages compassion, kindness, and unity, reminding us that despite our differences—such as culture, religion, language, or nationality—we are all deeply connected. The key ideas behind Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam are: interconnectedness, just like members of a family are linked by love and responsibility, all living beings on Earth are connected and dependent on each other. Our actions affect not just ourselves but the whole world, including the environment, unity in diversity - even though we all come from different backgrounds; we are united as one human family. Our diversity in culture, beliefs, and traditions adds beauty and richness to the world. We should celebrate these differences, not let them divide us, compassion and empathy. This concept encourages us to care for others, show empathy, and understand their struggles, just as we would for someone in our own family. Being kind and supportive builds stronger bonds between people, shared responsibility just as family members help each other; every person has a duty to care for the world. This includes looking after the environment, helping those in needs, and working toward fairness, peace, and justice for everyone, cultural exchange and learning from other cultures and sharing our own helps break down barriers and builds mutual respect. This exchange of knowledge and traditions makes us wiser and more understanding of others. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam teaches us to see beyond borders. Instead of thinking only in terms of nations or regions, we are encouraged to act as citizens of the world, with a shared responsibility for the planet and its people; promotion of peace by recognizing that we are all one family. This philosophy supports peaceful living, cooperation, and dialogue. It encourages solving problems through understanding and respect, not through conflict. In simple words Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam tells us to: treat everyone with love and respect, as if they were part of our own family, care for the Earth and all living beings, celebrate diversity while staying united, help others and stand for what is right and fair, think beyond personal or national interests, and work for the good of all. This timeless idea reminds us that the world is not divided into "us" and "them"—we are all part of one human family. By living with compassion, understanding, and shared responsibility, we can create a more peaceful, respectful, and connected world for everyone.

Ahimsa (Non-Violence) in IKS:

Ahimsa meaning non-violence or non-harming is a fundamental ethical principle shared by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Although all three traditions uphold the value of non-violence, the depth of its application and emphasis differs. Jainism gives ahimsa the highest level of importance, treating it as the ultimate standard for evaluating all human behavior. In contrast, Hinduism views ahimsa as a form of compassion toward all living beings, seen as expressions of the divine. Buddhism, meanwhile, incorporates ahimsa as a vital component of spiritual development, grounded in the principle of universal compassion. In Hinduism, ahimsa is rooted in the belief that the divine exists within all life

forms. Harming any creature, therefore, is considered equivalent to harming God. This belief fosters a deep sense of compassion and reverence for all living beings. Additionally, the law of karma reinforces the idea that harmful actions—whether in thought, word, or deed—will eventually return to the one who commits them. As such, ahimsa becomes a guiding ethical principle, encouraging love, empathy, and the reduction of harm in one's interactions with the world. In Buddhism, ahimsa is a central moral guideline and is enshrined as the first of the five precepts followed by practitioners. Non-violence is viewed as essential to personal spiritual growth and liberation from suffering. However, Buddhism places significant emphasis on ahimsa. The ethical weight of an action, such as killing, often depends on the motivation behind it. For instance, if an act of violence occurs in self-defense rather than with malicious intent, it may be seen as less karmically damaging. Nevertheless, ahimsa remains a universal principle, promoting respect and compassion for all sentient beings, based on the belief in shared spiritual essence. In Jainism, ahimsa is elevated to the highest spiritual and moral ideal. It is not merely one virtue among many but the ultimate criterion for judging right and wrong. Jainas interpret non-violence in the most comprehensive sense, extending it to all forms of life—including not only animals and humans but also plants and even microscopic organisms. This belief results in extremely meticulous practices, especially among monks. They may wear cloth masks to avoid inhaling tiny insects and sweep the ground before walking to prevent accidentally stepping on living beings. A strict vegetarian lifestyle is also observed. In Jain thought, even unintended harm generates negative karma, which binds the soul to the cycle of rebirth (samsara). Therefore, great care is taken to live in a way that causes the least possible harm.

Seva (Selfless Service) in the Indian Knowledge Systems

The Sanskrit word Seva is derived from the root words sah and eva, which together mean “with” or “together with.” At its core, seva represents the act of selfless service performed for the benefit of others, without any expectation of reward or personal gain. It is a fundamental expression of living a life rooted in compassion, humility, and interconnectedness. In the Way of Life outlined by the Indian Knowledge Systems, seva is not just a physical act—it is an attitude, one that reflects love, devotion, and a deep sense of responsibility toward others. Engaging in seva involves placing the needs of others before our own and serving with a sense of unity and purpose. This selfless service helps cultivate noble qualities such as empathy, gratitude, and humility. It aligns individuals with their higher nature and life's greater purpose—to uplift, support, and care for one another. The foundation of seva is love and devotion toward the Divine, often referred to as the Father. It arises naturally from within, motivated not by obligation, but by genuine love and a heartfelt desire to give. More than the actions themselves, seva is about the mindset with which one serves. True seva is carried out with sincerity, humility, and a pure heart, recognizing the divine in every being. It fosters a sense of unity, reminding individuals that we are all interconnected and part of a greater whole. The concept of seva fits within the broader framework of the Way of Life taught in the Indian Knowledge Systems—a holistic guide to living a meaningful, ethical, and spiritually enriched life. This way of life incorporates philosophical teachings, spiritual disciplines, ethical conduct, and daily practices aimed at self-discovery and personal growth. It promotes harmony on all levels—physical, mental, and spiritual—encouraging individuals to live with purpose and integrity. Additionally, these systems include rituals, ceremonies, and festivals that celebrate life, nature, and the divine, reinforcing a sense of cultural and spiritual identity. By following these principles and embracing values like seva, individuals can lead balanced, purposeful lives while remaining

connected to their cultural roots and the larger community. Ultimately, the Indian Knowledge Systems offer timeless guidance on how to live in alignment with one's higher self, in service to others, and in harmony with the world.

The Indian Knowledge System represents a timeless and deeply integrated vision of life that balances material, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. Far beyond a mere historical or cultural study, IKS serves as a living philosophy—one that continues to offer relevant and actionable insights in today's complex world. With its strong ethical foundation built on Dharma, Karma, Ahimsa, and Seva, IKS promotes a life of responsibility, compassion, and interconnectedness. These values encourage individuals to act with mindfulness, contribute positively to society, and cultivate inner harmony. Through practices such as yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda, IKS provides holistic tools for physical health, mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual awareness. The philosophical systems within IKS, especially Vedanta and Sankhya, offers pathways to deeper understanding and self-realization. At its core, IKS envisions humanity not as fragmented individuals or isolated communities, but as part of a unified existence, as beautifully expressed through Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—the world is one family. In a modern era marked by environmental crises, mental health challenges, and social fragmentation, the wisdom of IKS offers a valuable alternative rooted in sustainability, harmony, and inner strength. As contemporary education systems begin to recognize the value of indigenous knowledge, integrating IKS into academic and professional spheres can inspire more grounded, ethical, and innovative approaches to solving global issues. Ultimately, the Indian Knowledge System is not just a relic of the past—it is a guide for the present and a beacon for the future, fostering a life of purpose, balance, and universal well-being.

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